



AMS School Accreditation

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Accreditation is a service provided to full-member schools by the American Montessori Society. It is a voluntary process that takes 1 to 2 years to complete.

Accreditation begins with an intensive self-study, by the school, involving the school's entire community—students, staff, faculty, administration, board members, and parents.

During the process, every aspect of the school is examined and documented, including governance, curriculum, fiscal and personnel policies, facilities, health and safety practices, teacher preparation, and learner outcomes.

At the end of the self-study period, a thorough onsite peer visit is conducted. In addition to determining whether the school meets AMS standards, the review team evaluates the school to see how well it is achieving its own mission and goals—whether the school is what it says it is and does what it says it does.

After identifying both strengths and areas for improvement, the school commits to a strategic plan that incorporates the recommendations of its peer review team.

All AMS accredited schools must maintain compliance with school accreditation standards and be on a path of continuous improvement. Each accredited school submits a yearly report outlining progress toward the objectives in its strategic plan.



Become a Member

Your AMS membership supports our vital mission and includes valuable opportunities and benefits.

[View more benefits of membership in AMS »](#)

Webinar: School Accreditation 101

If you are contemplating AMS school accreditation, we highly recommend that you watch our on-demand webinar, [School Accreditation 101](#). It is available for viewing at any time.

Benefits of AMS Accreditation

The self-study at the heart of accreditation leads to discoveries that empower the entire school community.

Accreditation encourages continual self-evaluation and improvement, including ongoing professional development.

Additional visibility in our [Find a School search](#).

Affirms that a school meets a standard of excellence recognized within the Montessori community and by educators worldwide—a powerful marketing asset.

Provides assurance to families that their child's school is a quality one, and that it is accountable to a larger body.

It is increasingly recognized by state policymakers, granting AMS-accredited schools significant advantages, such as recognition within their state's quality rating and improvement system ("QRIS") or exemption from particular state licensing requirements.

Because AMS is accredited by the National Council for Private School Accreditation, schools that are AMS-accredited also gain accreditation by the NCPSA.

Eligibility for AMS Accreditation

To be eligible as a candidate for AMS accreditation, a school must meet all of the following requirements at the time of application:

In operation at least 3 years.

Is an AMS Full member.

Must be seeking accreditation for all program levels served by the Montessori school.

Age groupings must be as follows for all program levels seeking accreditation:

Infant & Toddler: Children from birth to age 3 may be grouped in varying multi-age configurations. A stand-alone classroom serving only 3-year olds does not satisfy this criterion.

Early Childhood: A 3-year age group within the range of 2.5 years to 6 years

Lower Elementary: Ages 6 – 9

Upper Elementary: Ages 9 – 12 or

Elementary I – II: Ages 6 – 12

Secondary: The school must offer an age grouping of either 12 – 14, 14 – 16, 16 – 18 or 12 – 15, 15 – 18

For schools with Infant & Toddler and Early Childhood levels, a minimum of a half-day session must be taught by a qualifying Montessori-credentialed teacher.

All lead teachers must hold a Montessori teaching credential for the age level taught. Teaching credentials must be from an AMS-affiliated program, an AMI-accredited program, an NCME program, or a MACTE-accredited program.

Lead teachers who do not hold the requisite Montessori credential are required to be enrolled in an AMS-, AMI-, or MACTE-accredited Montessori teacher education program and to be actively working toward earning a Montessori credential for the level at which they teach. Self-directed adult learners may serve in lead teaching positions in AMS-accredited schools and candidate schools.

Accreditation Process

For details about AMS accreditation, download the following documents:

[AMS School Accreditation Standards & Criteria](#)

[Initial Accreditation Steps & Timeline](#)

[Reaccreditation Steps & Timeline](#)

"School Accreditation Information Packet" [purchase form](#)

Other Accrediting Organizations

AMS strongly encourages schools to consider cooperative accreditation with AMS and another national/regional school accrediting association. Cooperative accreditation demonstrates compliance with both Montessori-specific standards, and with school standards that apply to non-Montessori schools.

AMS partners with more than 20 national/regional accrediting associations. The cooperative accreditation process is seamless. Schools complete 1 self-study; they create 1 strategic plan; and they host an on-site visit with representatives from both associations. The result? Two invaluable accreditations!

Substantive Changes

We recognize that change is a necessary part of school growth and understand that changes affecting major aspects of a school can make for challenging times. If your school is AMS-accredited and is experiencing any of the substantive changes below, we ask that you notify us by completing and sending us the appropriate form (click on the links). We also ask that you detail the change(s) in your next Accredited School Annual Report.

AMS accreditation staff will review your report of substantive change and determine if the change warrants review by the AMS School Accreditation Commission.

[Change of ownership](#)

[Change of legal status](#) (e.g., nonprofit to for-profit or vice versa)

[Resignation or turnover of 51% or more of the governing body](#)

[Addition of a program or age level](#)

[Relocation or change in facilities, or addition of a satellite campus or building](#)

[Acquisition of a new school or merger with another school/program](#)

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